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ABSTRACT

This training manual for ethnographic research was developed for use in the Student Perceptions and School Behavior Project. The first part of the manual discusses project objectives and methodology. The major goal of the project was to gain an understanding of how adolescents perceived their world--school, home, and community; to analyze the relationship between student perceptions and their school behavior; and to develop guidelines that may be used in programs for prevention and remediation. The participants in the study were groups of Blacks, Mexican Americans, and Anglo students in grades 6-8. Ethnographic interviews, audiovisual vignettes, classroom observations, and measures of the school environment were to be used to generate data. The second part of the manual, which comprises the bulk of the manual, contains tips and discusses techniques for conducting naturalistic inquiry and ethnographic interviews. General techniques for formal interviewing and ways to deal with the silent respondent are explored. Specific skills essential in naturalistic evaluation--listening, observing, questioning, hypothesizing, recapitulating, eliciting specific examples, and probing--are discussed. Desirable qualities of naturalistic evaluators are summarized. The manual concludes with a list of do's and don'ts for interviewing and references.
(Author/RM)

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Student Perceptions and School Behavior

ETHNOGRAPHIC TRAINING MANUAL

Prepared by Maria Garza-Lubeck

January, 1980

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		page
I.	Preface	i
II.	Forward	ii
III.	Introduction	1
IV.	Student Disruption: Where Does Perception Fit In?	3
V.	The Student Perceptions and School Behavior Project	6
VI.	Naturalistic Inquiry and Ethnographic Interviews	17
VII.	The School Site: Fieldwork, Protocol & Procedures	40
VIII.	Some Do's and Don'ts for Interviewing	45
IX.	Probing Techniques	47
X.	References	53
XI.	Post Script	55

PREFACE

This ethnographic training manual was developed and designed for use as a preparation for and a supplement to the Student Perceptions and School Behavior project training sessions for conducting ethnographic research within our school site. There are two required readings that precede the training manual.

> Rist, R.C. Ethnographic techniques and the study of an urban school. Urban Education, 1975, 10(i), pp. 86-108.
>
> and
>
> Wolcott, Harry F. Criteria for an ethnographic approach to research in schools. Human Organization, 1975, 34(2), pp. 111-127.

It should be noted that the sessions themselves provide the backbone for the training of ethnographers on our project. However, the major topics discussed in-depth, such as project conceptualization, naturalistic inquiry and ethnographic interviews, fieldwork protocol and procedures and probing techniques, are addressed and discussed within this manual.

—— M.G.L.

FORWARD

> Some students will not talk to you because no one has been interested in them before. They probably think you want to talk to them because they're in trouble. No one else has cared about what they think, so why should you?
>
> — Fifteen-year-old Mexican American girl

The Student Perceptions and School Behavior project's goal is to institute a systematic search for those factors that shape the pupil's perception of his/her world (self, others and the environment), and to identify those factors that generate disruptive behavior. To do so, we hope to follow an ethnographic approach with respect to methodology, based in part on student interviews, together with classroom and school climate observations. These different components make the project a multi-faceted study.

Ethnographic research is not an easy task. There are no questionnaires or surveys to administer within a certain period and no hurrying off to do a statistical count of the data collected. Instead, "The ethnographer's unique contribution is his commitment to understand and convey how it is to 'walk in someone else's shoes' and to 'tell it like it is.' However, he must also attend to how the participants themselves say it ought to be . . ." (Wolcott, 1975). Moreover, the ethnographer may frequently have stumbling blocks placed in his/her path, such as the unwillingness of the participant to talk to him/her. Talking to people is the crux of ethnographic research. Participant resistance such as the example cited in the above quote should be accepted

and understood in order to be, hopefully, eventually overcome. To do this requires intense observation and close, meaningful interaction with the participant. To be sure, a give-and-take relationship evolves in which the ethnographer becomes a part of the participant's life and vice versa. Wax (1971:363) has suggested that the researcher himself/herself will be changed by the field work experience. Indeed, getting to know people and striving to understand their reality as they see it also involves learning about oneself and growing in the fullest sense.

INTRODUCTION

It is of paramount concern to the Student Perceptions and School Behavior project to gain an understanding of how a student perceives his/her world. By "world" we mean the school, home and community experiences that shape the student's perceptions and, ultimately, effect his/her behavior in the school setting.

In order to know what meaning life experiences have for the adolescent student, we must be cognizant of how that student perceives his/her past and present, and even his/her future aspirations, and then integrates these perceptions into the here and now. Therefore, the major questions posed by the ethnographic Student Perceptions and School Behavior project are:

How do students perceive their world?

Why are these perceptions as they are?

What is the relationship between student perceptions and their school behavior?

There are two basic classifications of student behavior within school settings, according to official school policies: non-disruptive and disruptive. Whatever behavior a student manifests is a result of the meaning that they ascribe to the events that they encounter or have encountered in their own school, home or community setting. "Put simply, humans with different meanings for events live in different worlds or environments" (Lauer & Handel, 1975). Our goal here is to be able to discern perceptual patterns of non-disruptive and disruptive students in order to help educators understand why students behave in different ways.

Understanding why disruptive school behavior occurs is a necessary first-step toward resolving that behavior.

STUDENT DISRUPTION:

WHERE DOES PERCEPTION FIT IN?

It is well known that classroom discipline is the most pervasive problem facing schools today. Ten years of Gallop Polls on "Attitudes Toward Education" (1969-1978) reveal the American public's growing awareness of and concern with discipline problems at the pre-collegiate level.

"Discipline" is perhaps a misnomer; we are actually talking about student disruptive behavior. Nevertheless, the common definition of "discipline" usually encompasses such things as "lack of respect for teacher, flouting rules and regulations, improper behavior in the classroom, and general disregard for authority" (Kappa Delta Phi, 1978). In more extreme but not necessarily infrequent cases, deviant behavior in the classroom manifests itself in overt physical abuse of teachers and students by other students. It is certain that physical assaults, weapons, drug abuse and vandalism on school grounds are increasing at an alarming rate. However, analyses of the roots of these disturbing behavioral patterns related to discipline problems have been either minimized or ignored. Both educators and the public need to ask themselves, where did the conditions for this type of volatile, extreme behavior originate?

Essentially, disruptive classroom behavior is disruptive because it impedes or inhibits the educational process--the schools' principal function. But defining and identifying disruptive behavior is not as easy a task as one might assume, as the exercise below may make clear.

Try to determine whether each student behavior listed is: D-disruptive; N-nondisruptive; or U-unclear.

_____ The student frequently asks questions concerning the subject content or challenges the teacher's comments during lectures.

_____ The student never has materials with which to work--text, papers, or pencils.

_____ The student is the class bully and delights in antagonizing his/her classmates.

_____ The student loves to chew, pop and blow bubbles with his/her bubble gum during class.

_____ The student is barely audible when answering his/her teacher's oral questions and will not look into the teacher's eyes when speaking.

_____ The student throws paper planes across the room when the teacher's back is turned.

_____ The student is the ideal student, quiet, attentive, responsive and makes good grades.

_____ The student is frequently truant.

_____ The student is always falling asleep in class.

_____ The student uses foul language.

Identification of disruptive student behavior is a wholly subjective process and, as suggested by the above exercise, classification may often be tenuous at best. One cannot make accurate predictions about behavior or identify individual coping mechanisms. Is a student, after all, asserting his/her identity, trying to make some sense out of an irrelevant situation, or rejecting an artificially imposed condition? Does disruptive behavior indicate a lack of student initiative (individual control) or does it actually reflect self-control (by rejecting external authority and becoming his/her own authority figure)? How does the student himself/herself perceive this behavior? Why?

Again, a common definition of disruptive student behavior is the exhibition of violence toward teachers, classmates, or oneself. Vandalism is also cited as disruptive school behavior. However, are these more extreme forms of physical abuse perhaps but the boiling point in a stage of behavioral development characterized by what the student may perceive as a history of institutional repression and insensitivity (from the school itself, the student's home environment, or society at large) toward the student (Ross, 1979)?

If human behavior--action--is but a reaction to another stimulus, then the initiating stimulus must first be identified in order to understand, predict, and control certain types of behavior. Within the school setting, understanding the causes of disruptiveness is a crucial first step toward a real solution.

Finally, even the term disruptive is confusing. Does this mean that the behavior is disruptive to the teacher? To the offending student? To the classmates? Is the disruption impeding the education of the student himself/herself or the entire class? These are not problems of semantics. Rather, they represent factors of perception.

Because disruptive behavior is a symptom of a problem, educators need to be cognizant of its true source. To do this requires knowledge and understanding of how a student perceives his/her world and how that perception is manifested through his/her behavior. In short, what conditions does the student confront, and how does he/she cope with or adjust to these confrontations? What are the roots underlying disruptive behavior? This is the focal point of the Student Perceptions and School Behavior project.

Statement of Objectives

The overall purpose of this research project is to institute a systematic search for those factors that shape pupils' perceptions of their world (self, others, and the environment); to identify those factors that generate disruptive behaviors and which may be amenable to change; and ultimately, to develop guidelines that may be used in developing techniques and programs for prevention and remediation.

The specific objectives of this project are: (1) to determine perceptual patterns of a group of Black, Mexican-American, and Anglo middle school (grades 6-8) students defined as disruptive and non-disruptive; (2) to determine if perceptual patterns differentiate disruptive and non-disruptive populations across groups and/or within ethnic groups; (3) to determine if relationships exist between defined disruptive behaviors and defined perceptual patterns; (4) to identify the nature and type of experiences that appear to influence disruptive students' perceptions; and (5) to identify those experiential and environmental factors influencing student perception that would provide a basis for developing programs of intervention and prevention within public schools.

Although schooling is one of the most universal experiences of American life, that experience does not produce either universal effects upon students or universal perceptions of the experience among students. Two recently reported phenomena that relate to the effect of our present educational process and the perceptions of that process are the nationwide decline in academic achievement scores and the nationwide rise in disruptive, destructive, and delinquent student behaviors (Bayh, 1977).

We do not view these as discrete and unrelated phenomena but rather as very concrete representations of student responses to their experiences of schooling.

The relationships between the decline of achievement scores and the rise in disruptive and delinquent behaviors can offer insight into the nature of the problems they represent and a possible course for seeking solutions. This relationships is, again, a very real part of the experience of students and particularly of those minority students who are over-represented as a population in the categories of academic failure, school dropouts, and school expulsions. We are referring to the insidious but nevertheless still accurate value of low socio-economic status as a predictor of low academic achievement, high student dropout rates, and high student expulsion rates . . . in other words, low socio-economic status (SES) or minority status is a predictor of the nature of students' experiences in our public schools and not just of the outcomes.

The concept of student SES as a powerful predictor of student outcomes has become almost traditional among educational researchers who not only use SES as a proxy variable for that plexus of environmental and experiential factors generally used to define SES (e.g., income level, occupation, and educational levels) but also as a variable that presumes to represent levels of cognitive ability. Such a concept is inherent in this statement by the Director of The National Institute of Education:

> . . . in arguing that it is unreasonable to expect education by itself to equalize income and eliminate social class, I am not taking the position that education should endorse the status quo. To the contrary, one of the major goals of the NIE is to promote the equality of educational opportunity. We limit our charge, however, to reducing the predictive value of race, sex, and class on academic performance. (Graham, 1979).

How are we to reduce the predictive value of these demographic variables with regard to student academic achievement when they also predict the nature of the school experience, unless we look within and beyond those variables for factors of environment and experience that shape students' perceptions and influence their behavioral responses? We are looking only at behavioral responses when we look at achievement scores, dropout figures, and the rising incidence of school violence, vandalism, and disruption. As is stated by Wilson (1977):

> Human actions have more meaning than just the concrete facts of who, what, where, and when that an outsider can observe; they have more meanings than even the responses the subjects could give them when being introspective (for instance, in an interview of an attitude scale marking). The ethnographer strives to uncover these meanings.

We need to look at student behaviors as responses to their perceptions and to ask if there are identifiable factors in students' perceptions of self, others, and their environments that influence the nature of their behavioral response to their schooling experiences.

We take as our premise that the most pervasive link between behavior and experience is perception (Lewin, 1951; Lindzey and Aronson, 1968; Sherif and Sherif, 1969). It is perception that creates the individual's frame of reference and becomes a crucial factor in individual behavior (Syngg and Combs, 1949). It is how individuals perceive and subsequently define situations that determines their responses. It is how others are perceived in relation to the self; how interactive events are interpreted; how the individual perceives the environment, the reflection of self from that environment, and impact of self upon others and the environment that can be linked to the attitudes, beliefs, values,

concerns, goals, and behaviors of individuals.

To begin our systematic search for perceptual factors, we shall select a population of students who have been administratively defined as "disruptive" and elicit from them their perceptions of self, of others, of their environments, and their interpretations and perceptions of their own behavior. The same procedure will be followed for students labeled "non-disruptive." With these data we can begin our search for those factors within their experiences and their environments that appear to influence their perceptions and to be characteristic of perceptual patterns and behavioral patterns.

We say patterns because we neither hypothesize nor expect that there is one, and only one, perceptual profile for all disruptive or non-disruptive students. Nor do we anticipate that there will be even one factor mutual to the perceptual profiles of all disruptive or non-disruptive students. As Kluckholn reportedly observed, "A man is in some respect like all other men, in other respects like some other men, and in still other respects like no other men" (Wepman and Heine, 1963). We are not proposing that disruptive students are alike in any respect other than their acquired classification as "disruptive," nor are we proposing to deal with totally idiosyncratic phenomena. We are hypothesizing that, given a mutuality in the nature of an "acting out" behavorial response, we can look for other similarities in experiential, environmental, and perceptual categories to identify factors by which some students can be said to be like some others.

We are hypothesizing, then, that those individuals who differentiate themselves from others by their behaviors will have similarities in their

perceptions of self, others, and the environment that will cross all demographic variables. It is further hypothesized that similarities in perception will be related to similarities in the nature and quality of experiences occurring in the lives of "disruptive" students without regard to demographic data. Both of these hypotheses are based upon social and psychological models of human development that stress the relationship between socially acceptable, adaptive behaviors and positive, nurturant experiences on the one hand, and socially deviant, maladaptive behaviors or deficient experiences on the other. The form that these experiences take is not important, but the nature of the impact is. Rejection in any form when acceptance is being sought can be considered to have a negative impact.

The collection of data for the study of students' perceptions utilizes methods addressing hypotheses derived from psycho-social theories. However, when we undertake the collection of data for the study of experiential and environmental factors in the classroom and school milieu, another orientation will pervade this investigation. A distinct dimension of this project is exploration--an attempt to identify variables in the total milieu (human and physical environment) that may have relevance to the behaviors of students. According to Wolcott (1975):

> The ethnographer doing research in schools is quite likely to be interested in social behavior outside as well as inside them. The commitment to education as cultural process necessitates a broader perspective than that obtained by confining one's attention to events within the walls of the school building. Quite rightly, the ethnographer will want to look at (and contrast) what is learned in schools and what is learned outside them, at what is taught formally and what is taught informally, at unintended as well as intended consequences of formal instruction.

We emphasize the need to make no a priori hypotheses regarding the environmental or experiential variables salient to the problem(s) and/or the relevant relationships that might exist. The "exploratory" nature of the study truly dictates the need for a careful description of the "reality" of setting to insure that potentially critical aspects do not escape investigations because of a design too rigid to be sensitive to unknowns. Dimensions of the problem under investigation are similar to the problem of "education for the socially disadvantaged," and the issues raised by Gordon (RER, February, 1979) in studying "socially disadvantaged" are important here:

1. With rare exceptions the available research relating to the disadvantaged treats the target population as if it were a homogeneous group despite the mounting evidence that heterogeneity within the several subgroups so designated may be a more crucial problem in educational planning.
2. Similarly there appears to be a search for generic treatments or the one solution to the neglect of multiple solutions, individualization, or the matching of treatment to specific characteristics.
3. Studies in the area tend to depend excessively on quantitative measures and static variables to the neglect of the process variables and the qualitative analysis of the behaviors, circumstances, and conditions studies.
4. Too much research is directed at relationships between single variables despite increasing awareness that there are few if any phenonema which can be adequately explained on the basis of

the interaction between only two variables. Too little direction is given to the examination of multiple interactions and multiple relationships in the genesis of behavior or behavior change.

5. Particularly in the study of disadvantaged populations, investigators suffer from the tendency to view characteristics which differ from some presumed norm as negative and consider any correlation between these negative characteristics and learning dysfunction as culpable. This leads to a view of difference as something to overcome rather than a phenomenon with which to work.
6. In evaluating a treatment, the tendency is to infer from negative results that the treatment cannot work when in fact there frequently was no effort to determine whether the treatment as prescribed was actually applied. The quality of many large scale programs is indeed questionable.
7. In their effort to be rigorous in the use of control groups, investigators fail to see the extent to which adequate control is increasingly difficult given the complexity of our society, or the extent to which control and experimental groups interact in incidental and indirect contacts. The result may be that the experimental group is acting directly or indirectly on the control group.
8. Educational research has been dominated by a concern with hypothesis testing or verification to the neglect of investigation based on careful and systematic observation; this rather

than theory testing is the immediate goal. In a field where the available leads are so few, the discovery of theory may be a more productive research strategy, particularly when this is toward efforts at better understanding and controlling the mechanisms of learning facility and learning dysfunction in heterogenous populations characterized by differential background opportunities and patterns of intellectual and social function.

While several of the points presented by Gordon have implications for the current Student Perceptions and School Behavior project, point eight is particularly salient. This investigation will include "careful, systematic observation." A narrative describing the context within which students live and learn will be prepared based on extended observations, interviews, and examinations of appropriate materials. The narrative will attempt to present an accurate picture of the physical and social reality existing in the school. This narrative will be examined to identify potentially relevant variables explaining student behavior. Possible relationships between variables will be suggested as hypotheses to be tested in more traditional verification studies.

By including the ethnographic, descriptive dimension to the study, questions raised by Mitchel (RER, December, 1969) will be, in part, addressed. He suggested the inadequacy of educational research findings, even though sophisticated statistical designs were utilized. It was suggested that a person-environment interaction is critical for understanding and predicting human behavior. The thrust of research should be to understand the complexities and relationships. His charge to education

is to be careful, observant, thoughtful, and critical (in a constructive sense) in our research, and to look for other variables affecting results rather than statistical errors or artifacts of measurement.

The extensive descriptive narrative will help insure an adequate data base to analyze, interpret, and explain the "complexities and relationships" of student behavior. As indicated earlier, continuous extensive observations of students in the range of activities and formal and informal interviews with students, teachers, and staff, will be the source of data for the description. Issues of validity and reliability will be addressed by utilizing different interviews and observers and attempting to reconcile their perceptions and reports. The goal in the development of the narrative is reality and a report that those involved in the study (students, teachers, and staff) will accept as accurate. As Virginia Koehler notes (1978):

> A rigorous approach is crucial to descriptive research. Descriptive methodology increases will increase the reliability and validity of the results and admits the possibility of replication. Replication of research which confuses data collection and coding with interpretation--all within the head of one individual--is impossible.

We believe that it is important to reduce the predictive value of student race, sex, and class on academic performance, but we do not believe this can be done without reducing the value of these same variables as predictors of the nature of the schooling experience. But it is even more important that the experience of schooling should become the means whereby all students gain a positive perception of themselves, others, and their environment along with their preparation for responsible citizenship.

Statement of Procedures

Naturalistic Inquiry, as well as techniques of applied research, will be utilized in the research metnodology. This approach differs from that of the Behaviorists who generally follow the more traditional research methods: beginning with a priori theory or with explicit operational definitions, and working "toward theories that can cope with more complex and elaborate phenomena in human behavior . . ." (McDavid and Harari, 1968). More in the nature of the Cognitivists, who express a preference for starting with the complexities of human behavior and working gradually toward precise definitions, Naturalistic Inquiry is phenomenological and is "aimed at a search for meaning" (Wolf, 1979). It is concerned with understanding human behavior from the individual's frame of reference, since the reality for that person ". . . exists only in the minds of individual people and depends heavily on this separate perception (Guba, 1978). Wolf and Tymitz (1976-77) suggest:

> . . . naturalistic inquiry attempts to present "slice-of-life" episodes documented through natural language and representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, how they know it, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions and understandings are.

Ethnographic interviews, audiovisual vignettes, classroom observations, and measures of the school environment will be used to generate data for this project.

By the end of May, 1980, final revisions of most data-gathering processes and procedures will be accomplished--as will appropriate training guides. In addition, some analysis of data gathered in preliminary ethnographic interviews will be subjected to analysis in order to

determine what patterns may have emerged and to determine means of further refining the technique.

NATURALISTIC INQUIRY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS

The following section is comprised of excerpts from Strategies for Conducting Naturalistic Evaluation in Socio-Educational Settings: The Naturalistic Interview, by Dr. Robert L. Wolfe, Indiana University.

General Techniques for Formal Interviewing

Over the past several years arguments have been made that far too much faith has been placed in the potential of traditional inquiry strategies for uncovering subtle aspects of educational practice and informing new directions for educational change. Most interesting is the fact that persons who have provided great leadership in the areas of behavioral research, experimental/quasi-experimental design, psychometric theory and statistical inference are the ones articulating the more compelling criticisms of conventional methods (Campbell, 1974; Cronbach, 1975; Bronfenbrenner, 1976; and Glass, 1975). This criticism has provoked much thought, and a heightened search for new or appropriate methodologies is underway.

My own belief is that Naturalistic Evaluation approaches are needed to study the impact and effectiveness of educational practices (Wolf and Tymitz, 1976, 1977). Evaluation becomes naturalistic if it: (1) orients more directly to current and spontaneous activities, behavior, and expressions rather than to some set of pre-stated formal objectives, (2) responds to educators, administrators, learners, and the public's interest in different kinds of information, and (3) accounts for the different values and perspective that exist whenever the questions of impact and/or effect are introduced. Naturalistic Evaluation takes a broad, holistic view of the program of institution being studied, is more interpretative than

judgmental, and required participation from a wide range of people who are to be served by the study effort. Therefore, when I speak of Naturalistic Evaluation, I refer to procedures that attempt to capture what actually occurs in educational settings. In other words, procedures that focus on persons as they are engaged in their educational experience or as they are impacted upon by some educational program. It is a dynamic inquiry process demanding extensive interaction between evaluator and participants. In this sense, data collection episodes (observations, interviews, etc.) require documenting natural behavior and initiating natural conversations. Perhaps, most importantly, Naturalistic Evaluation depends upon relating natural behaviors and expressions to the context in which they arise. This perspective is predicated upon the belief that in order to best serve people involved in or affected by educational programs the process must guide and inform the decisions that need to be made--that is, the process must respond to people's concerns. Additionally, Naturalistic Evaluation is aimed at understanding what impact an educational program is having on all those concerned. In other words, Naturalistic Evaluation insures that persons involved in the program in question have an opportunity to describe their experiences, assess the quality thereof, and comment on the meaning of those experiences to them. Thus Naturalistic Evaluation is aimed at a search for meaning.

And it is this search for meaning that distinguishes Naturalistic Evaluation from other field-oriented strategies. For example, oftentimes the term Ethnography, the descriptive method of Cultural Anthropology, has been used synonymously or at least substitutively for Naturalistic Evaluation. Perhaps the attempt to distinguish the two might be viewed as picayune or

semantic. But the entire Naturalistic Evaluation process rests on a set of constructions which are part semantic and part conceptual. Operationalizing the process, therefore, is closely tied to definition and concept. To proceed without explicating distinctions would, in the long run, do a serious disservice to what I consider to be important advances in socio-educational methodology.

Actually, then, it is probably a mistake to conceive Naturalistic Evaluation as being similar to Ethnography or to other conventional field methods, for that matter. Naturalistic Evaluation concerns an orientation --an operational form that links the evaluator directly with the system being examined. Ethnography, on the other hand, is a method. It provides a descriptive "paraphrase" of the system under scrutiny--a way to describe and hypothesize. The record emerges set in the form of a series of pictures of events, characters, interactions and transactions. In one sense, Naturalistic Evaluators might rely on ethnographic techniques to accomplish the descriptive part of their task. But Naturalistic Evaluation is the more superordinate paradigm.

Several years ago I wrote, "Being there is field research. Being there is Naturalistic Evaluation." I still believe the distinction to be extremely significant. For as I recall the many hours I have spent studying natural settings, I understand now that what I was struggling with was not at all a refinement of observational, conversational, and analytical techniques toward the end of description alone. The struggle had much more to do with ascertaining meaning--my meaning, their meaning. I did not only seek pictures as the end result. I sought instead a sense of the multiple realities, multiple perceptions, and multiple truths paraded before me

which ultimately took the form of a configuration of meaning. I can find no technical term that captures the essence of what I am attempting to depict. As an expediency I have invented the term ontography--a picturing of meaning.

This rendering of meaning must come from the participants themselves. Evaluators practicing Naturalistic Evaluation must have both the skills and sensibilities that enable them to elicit such meaning through protracted interactions, in-depth conversational interviews, extensive artifact identification and analysis, and multi-leveled observations. In essence, everything counts--all forms of evidence are important and useful, but each piece of datum must be weighed and understood contextually.

Procedurally, Naturalistic Evaluation unfolds through successive phases and iterative strategies. It contours itself to the realities that exist in situ. And it responds to the subtle and distinct variations in people's expectations, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. Issues are identified, discussed, and clarified by sampling teachers, parents, administrators, ancillary staff, learners, community and vested interest group members, and the public at large. The sampling technique is emergent and purposive rather than randomized or matched. The randomization or matching that typically occurs in evaluation studies is aimed at controlling for systematic bias. In the same stroke, however, it "neutralizes" the informer by cloaking the perspective that needs to be revealed. Naturalistic Evaluation, on the other hand, in its search for critical meaning, attempts to uncover, examine, and understand bias. Using traditional sampling procedures with Naturalistic Evaluation leads if not to great loss then to little gain. Rather, persons are selected because of the values and beliefs they hold. They are also selected because of the roles they perform, the

advocacy they give to certain positions, or their level of participation in the system being assessed. Individuals are sought because they typify one of a number of different perceptions that exist. Obviously, central tendency data is important, but so are idiosyncratic responses. Uniqueness is honored. Points of view legitimized. Each separate interaction potentially leads to other interactions. Each respondent helps contribute to the emerging sampling plan by identifying others that should be talked with--because they either agree or disagree with the viewpoint being expressed. Likewise, events or other forms of available evidence oftentimes provoke the need for additional data collection episodes. For example, existing student achievement results might suggest a number of different persons that need to be interviewed so as to help understand factors that might have influenced such outcomes. From these kind of discussions, observations, and interactions new questions are raised, new data sought, confirmation and disconfirmation of emerging theses or data trends occurs, evaluation feedback is provided, new decision needs arise and so it goes. Naturalistic Evaluation is not static--the design is not formulated in advance. The study evolves and is modified as the evaluation staff interacts with people in or about the program in question.

The power of this interactive format cannot be overemphasized. Sometimes when evaluators refer to respondents they use the word "subjects" to distinguish themselves from the data source(s). But the two words have distinctly different etymological bases and the distinction reveals an important dimension to Naturalistic Evaluation. Subject, from the Latin subjectus, means to place under, put under--one under authority. Respondent, on the other hand, from the Latin respondens means promise back. The

former implies control, the latter mutuality. The difference, as stated, is important, While it is technically incorrect to use the two terms interchangeably, the philosophical differences between them are even more significant. The notion of respondent as subject relies on secrecy and separation between evaluator and informant/participant. In Naturalistic Evaluation, as I conceptualize it, the aim is to bring evaluator and respondent as close together as possible--to transcend roles, to forfeit the hidden agenda, to become "partners" in a mutual quest for perspective. The reality of the interpersonal context can best be described as a partnership--an inter-view of partners. The interpersonal, interexperiential dynamics produce an exchange of information, insights, expressions, opinions, misgivings, humor, etc. Persons conducting Naturalistic Evaluation must have the capacity to initiate and sustain such intense interactions and at the same time maintain a delicate, "scientific" detachment, particularly for analytical purposes. I refer to this posture as "optimal distance."

In sum, the Naturalistic Evaluation approach is based on the assumption that evaluation should respond to the needs, interests, and perceptions of all those involved in or affected by the evaluation study--the participants shape the direction of the inquiry. Philosophicallly, Naturalistic Evaluation legitimizes the assertion that there are multiple realities, multiple perceptions, and multiple truths. Thus, unlike many other investigation methods, Naturalistic Evaluation elicits, considers and builds upon the in-depth information that is provided by its many respondents. The final data interpretations portray similarities and differences in perceptions while describing the origin and context for such agreements and discrepancies.

The Questioning Process

Show the respondent you are genuinely interested and that you accept him/her as a person. Be warm and responsive The interaction between interviewer and respondent must be pleasant and satisfying. Each respondent must be approached in a positive, self-assured, but matter-of-fact manner. Friendliness, not familiarity, is an asset. A compliment, such as admiring the office, talking about the school, common experiences, or pleasantly remarking about the community, will often break the ice and help establish rapport.

The response should not have to depend on something from a previous statement to be clear. If a question annoys a respondent because it seems repetitious, acknowledge that there was a similar question before, but explain that this is the first time for this specific question and that for purposes of the study you would like to have his/her response to this one fully and separately.

Record verbatim. You may, however, paraphrase or summarize what the respondent said in reply to a broad question. If you treat the response as a serious matter, your respondent will also take his/her task seriously. Many people develop their own shorthand for taking notes, which is appropriate as long as you can later translate the responses into the full form.

Be sure the response addresses the question. Sometimes the respondent talks around a qustion without really answering it. Make it a rule to ask yourself, "Is he/she really answering the question?"

Record details. Specific data are extremely useful. Always record the reasons why a person feels the way he/she does. Never try to judge on the spot what you think are important things and then exclude the rest.

This task occurs at a later time during data analysis.

Write as plainly as possible, adding explanatory statements in your notes where you feel they are needed. If the respondent uses an unfamiliar term or acronym, ask for clarification. And, if the respondent should refuse to answer a certain question, write the word "refused" under that question.

Never change a response after you have finished recording it. Sometimes embarrassing details come out in interviewing, but remember that confidentiality has been promised.

The Silent Respondent

The respondent may use an "I don't know" response for a number of reasons. It is important to understand why in order to deal with it. Possible reasons include these:

* The respondent does not understand the question and says, "I don't know" to avoid saying he/she doesn't understand.

* The respondent may be thinking the question over and say "I don't know" to fill the silence while he/she thinks.

* The respondent may be trying to evade the issue because he/she feels uninformed and may give a wrong answer, or because the question seems too personal.

* The respondent may really not know or may have no opinion on the subject.

Rembember: An expectant pause, a reassuring remark, or repeating the question will encourage the respondent to reply.

A respondent may want to terminate the interview because he/she has responded with "I don't know" too many times and feels embarrassed. In this case, immediately reassure him/her that the interview is not a test

of knowledge and that answers are important even if the answer is "I don't know." Such statements as "take a moment to think about it"; "there's no hurry, take time to think that through"; "many of these questions are rather involved so take your time"; are reassuring to a respondent.

Every evaluator, at one time or another, encounters a respondent who is simply a "dud." For a range of reasons, the person is unable to respond in a useful way during the interview. If you feel you have attempted a number of the above suggestions, skillfully make a statement or pose a question that allows the interview to end on a positive note. Try to help the interviewee feel the conversation was useful to you. Thank the respondent for cooperating and comment that you may be speaking with him/her again.

Other Problems

A segment of all potential respondents may never be interviewed for any of a variety of reasons. They may not be there when you arrive; or they may refuse to cooperate when you do call or refuse to continue the interview after they have begun. Record these situations and treat them as important data in their own right.

While the ideas presented are useful in all interview situations there are certain instances that require a more specialized set of considerations. This is particularly true for more spontaneous interviewing.

Essential Interviewing Skills in Naturalistic Evaluation

Listening

Everyone probably feels that he/she is an adequate or even a good listener but actually very few of us have the listening acuity to make us truly keen listeners. As our society becomes increasingly complex, and auditory stimuli bombard us, we develop the necessary survival strategy of denying much of this input. For example, sounds of Muzak, computers, airplanes, and cars are constant elements of the environment that we commonly ignore or block out. We are further numbed by visual stimuli and have adjusted to passively receiving overwhelming amounts of information through visual media with the result that listening attention span, acuity, and comprehension are diminished. In essence, active skills have been supplanted by passive listening skills.

It is crucial that the Naturalistic Evaluator perceive himself/herself as a finely tuned mechanism to take in, integrate, and interpret what the speaker is saying. This is a dynamic process that continues throughout the interview. Listening is the vehicle of effective conversation. For this methodology it is the building block of the data collection process. Active listening promotes a rich, in-depth interview from which useful and appropriate interpretations can emerge.

Perhaps the most important thing I can say about listening is that no matter how well we think we do it now, we can and must do it more effectively to get the most out of Naturalistic Interviews.

Behaviors for an Active Listener

* Concentrate on the respondent's message rather than on what you will say next.

* Synthesize and analyze the respondent's message on the spot. Synthesizing requires summarizing in process, separating "wheat from chaff." Analyzing requires that you put the summary in some context allowing for various interpretations.

  SYNTHESIS: "So you are telling me that with the widespread public you serve, designating intriguing and exciting educational programs that will last many years is your greatest concern."

  ANALYSIS: "Is it more of budget problem, a content problem, or perhaps a personnel problem?"

Observing

I have discussed the concept of unobtrusive measurement and its relationships to sharp observational skills. Other strategies for systematic observation are equally important. During an interview, you should observe:

* the respondent's behavior (dress, body language, expressions, voice, interactions with others)

* the immediate physical environment (office, home, classroom)

* the contextual environment (building, community)

The report of the interview should deal with both the interview situation itself and the information gained from asking questions. In each of these areas statements should be made about the speaker's behavior, the immediate environment, and the contextual environment. Entries for the interview process and elicited information would be different, however, as the following examples illustrate:

Example 1: Observation of the Respondent's Behavior

Interview Situation	Elicited Information
"The respondent appeared to be anxious about my mission. He was reluctant at first to relate his staff position. He played with paper clips the whole time I spoke with him."	"The respondent became upset as he described the staff tensions. He relaxed again when he described good relations between the school and the public."

Example 2: Observations of the Contextual Environment

Interview Situation	Elicited Information
"Principal Bear's office was cold and austere. While he described his feelings about humane institutions and the warm relationships that existed in his school, his own personal space appeared contradictory to the image he tried to portray."	"Principal Bear spoke of tense personnel relationships suggesting that teachers and administrators feel they have little private space or private time. He stated that the building is so crowded that there is no room for a teacher lounge."

A note of caution is in order. While observations are a necessary and intriguing component of Naturalistic Evaluation, it is important to maintin one's sense of what information is relevant to record. Bizarre information or inappropriate inferences drawn from highly idiosyncratic occurrences may serve to distort, dilute, or dangerously threaten other data that are vital to the study.

Questioning

The process of asking appropriate questions in Naturalistic Evaluation relies heavily on one's ability to listen actively and respond in a way that generates extended replies from the respondent. Standard interview forms typically allow the interviewer to follow set questions in sequence, record the respondent's answers, and terminate the interview. This methodology,

however, relies on an open-ended format which seeks to generate full and individual responses to the initial question by following it with hypothesizing, recapitulation, eliciting specific examples, and probing. The Naturalistic Evaluator must listen actively and closely, using skillful judgment of when to probe, to recapitulate, etc. Each interview thus takes its own individual and unique shape. Furthermore, because of this on-the-spot expansion, the respondent can correct, illustrate, or clarify the content.

Hypothesizing

A common type of hypothesizing is forming "if-then" statements. The "if" part is generally related to the preceding information the respondent has given. The "then" part is more abstract and develops from your understanding of the issues, the information the respondent has given, and your ability to postulate cause-effect relationships. Some other hypothetical phrases are as follows:

Given this . . . would that . . .

What would happen if . . .

Is it because . . . or is it because . . .

Example of Hypothesizing

Principal: "We only have two teachers in our program who have had any training in special education"

Interviewer: "If you had more trained teachers, then would you feel more confident about implementing programs for handicapped children?"

Recapitulating

At various points in the interview it is important to summarize what the respondent has said--sometimes for your benefit and sometimes for his/hers. Be forewarned that it is not uncommon for a respondent to be a bit uncomfortable with your summation even if it is entirely accurate. Nevertheless, recapitulation aids your understanding of the respondent's perspective while you are *in situ* and can serve as a reliability check. Often it will stimulate the respondent to embellish and/or clarify the original statement. Common recapitulation starters are these:

So you are saying that . . .

I want to be sure I understand what you are saying . . .

Let me see if I understand what you are telling me . . .

While recapitulation is not a direct questioning behavior, it functions indirectly to alert the respondent to validate your interpretation. (Incidentally, the act of verbally summarizing in an interview tends to aid later narrative and interpretive reporting.)

Eliciting Specific Examples

Much can be learned when an individual is asked to relate an example or incident that clarifies a statement or series of statements. The example may alter your interpretation of what has been said thus far; it may reveal new information; or it may simply drive home a point. The example may be unrelated to the issue at point, alerting you to pause and attempt to clarify where you are. Common questions for eliciting examples are these:

Do you recall any particular instances of that?

Is there a recent example of what you're saying?

Could you describe an experience that illustrates your feeling, perception, etc.?

The examples respondents give tend to be highly informative and rich in interest. Attempt to incorporate them directly into narrative and summary reports. Be as meticulous in recording examples as in recording verbatim quotes, since both are likely to be good for bases of further investigation.

Probing

This is a technique used by the interviewer to stimulate discussion and obtain more information. Probes motivate the respondent to respond more fully by enlarging his/her statement, clarifying it, or explaining the reasons behind it. They can also focus the discussion on the specific content of the interview so that irrelevant and unnecessary information can be eliminated. Probes must perform these two functions without introducing bias. Probing is essential when the initial response to a question is incomplete, irrelevant, unclear, or inconsistent. There are fact probes, verification probes, trigger probes, and motivation probes.

Following are several types of strategies that can be used to probe the respondent to communicate more fully.

Reassuring Sounds. Saying such things as "uh huh," or "I see," or "yes," or "That's interesting," indicates that the interviewer has heard the response given so far, is interested, and expects more.

An Expectant Pause. The pause often accompanied by an expectant look or nod of the head allows the respondent time to gather his/her thoughts. It is the simplest way of saying to the respondent that he/she

has begun to answer the question but you feel that he/she has more to say. One caution is appropriate, however, if the respondent is out of ideas, the pause will not stimulate any further discussion.

Repeating the Question. When the respondent does not seem to understand the question, when he/she misinterprets it, when he/she seems unable to make up his/her mind, or when he strays from the subject, it is very useful to repeat the question just as it is written in the format. Many respondents hearing a question for the second time realize what kind of response is expected.

Repeating the Respondent's Statements. Simply repeating what the respondent has said as soon as he/she has stopped talking is often an excellent probe. This can be done as you are taking notes, so that you are actually repeating the respondent's reply and recording at the same time. Hearing his/her idea repeated often stimulates further thought by the respondent.

Neutral Questions or Comments. Neutral questions or comments are frequently used to obtain clearer and fuller responses. Examples:

What do you mean?

Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?

Will you tell me what you have in mind?

I am not sure I understand What you have in mind.

Why do you think this is so?

Could you tell me why you feel this way?

Which figure do you think comes closest?

What do you think causes that?

Anything else?

Such questions indicate the interviewer is interested and more information is desired. However, it is necessary that the interviewer recognize immediately just how the respondent's answer has failed to meet the objective of the question. The interviewer must then formulate a neutral type of question to elicit the information needed.

Asking for Further Clarification. It is sometimes a good technique for the interviewer to indicate that he/she doesn't quite understand what the respondent is trying to say (for example, "I'm not quite sure what you mean . . . could you tell me a little more?"). This technique can arouse the respondent's desire to cooperate with a human being trying to do a good job. (However, the respondent should not get the feeling that the interviewer does not know when a question is properly answered.) Clarification is very useful in dealing with what appears to be an answer that is inconsistent with previous answers. For example, the interviewer might say, "I am sorry, but I am not sure I understood. Did you mention previously . . .?" and then briefly mention the respondent's earlier answer. It is important that you appear to ask this question because you did not understand. Do not appear to contradict or cross-examine the respondent in any way. If you feel you cannot ask for clarification of an inconsistent answer without upsetting the respondent, simply go on with the other questions.

After each interview has ended, it is necessary to find a quiet spot and allow five to ten minutes to add to your notes by recording additional observations, points to ponder, summative statements, and overall impressions.

Final Caveats and Suggestions

Probably everyone starting to engage in Naturalistic Interviewing wishes there were a list of rules he/she could follow, but unfortunately, this is impossible because interviewing takes place between human beings who are much too individualized to be reduced to a formula. To be sure, there are certain psychological traits that characterize most people, most of the time, and a skillful interviewer will do well to keep some of the more important of these in mind. Interviewing is an art, a skilled technique that can be improved and eventually perfected primarily through continued practice.

Important Points to Consider in Naturalistic Interviewing

* Since much human motivation is unconscious, the interviewer should be tolerant and avoid passing judgment on divergent attitudes if he/she is to facilitate the interview process.

* Every situation contains factual information and opinions. Both are legitimate and important, but the interviewer must try to understand the difference.

* Negative feelings are often concealed but may be significant--the interviewer must cautiously probe for hostile feelings.

* An emotional relationships, positive or negative, will naturally develop between respondent and interviewer. Do not try to eliminate this relationship but try to control its nature and intensity.

* Try to be aware of your own prejudices and not let them influence the interview. The tendency to condemn all behavior that conflicts with one's own standards is natural but damaging to the Naturalistic Evaluation process.

* Record not only what the repondent says but what he/she does not say. Observe behavior, attitudes, etc.

* Accept silences. A good listener waits patiently during the times when the respondent is thinking silently, so he/she can formulate his/her answer easily.

* Try to help the respondent to relax.

* Always interview in a setting where the respondent will not be distracted or uncomfortable.

* Do not be afraid to ask the respondent to repeat and/or clarify a response.

* Look for contradictions--make a note of them.

* The first words a respondent says are often significant. Record them.

* Write a summary of the interview as soon as possible, especially before engaging in another interview, so that responses don't get confused. Include notes on the demeanor of the respondent--cooperativeness, hostility, articulateness, accuracy of response, knowledge of the issues, etc.

Summary of Desirable Qualities of a Naturalistic Evaluators

A good interviewer must have quite an array of personal qualities and interviewing skills in relating to people, all of which ultimately facilitate eliciting full, relevant, in-depth, and broad responses to the interview questions. Many of the abilities listed imply great flexibility, versatility, and keen judgment of how to handle oneself and the interaction at each moment.

In presenting him/herself in the situation and relating to the respondent, the interviewer should:

* Conduct all activities in a nonthreatening manner.
* Skillfully observe a situation while participating in it.
* Approach the interaction with an appropriate degree of pleasure, ease, and friendliness.
* Be self-confident and curious, but not challenging, pushy, or argumentative.
* Demonstrate a sincere interest in the respondent, the importance of the interview and the importance of the study.
* Respect the respondent's feelings and opinions while remaining neutral and uninvolved.
* Attempt to see the respondent as others might in the same setting.
* Refrain from imposing your opinions, morals, values, or frame of reference on the respondent.
* Maintain a tolerance for the variety of human differences and human preferences. The cliche, "different strokes for different folks" applies aptly.
* Make personal and mental adjustments to the variations you experience so that you can maximize your learning from people and settings. Become comfortable with unanticipated responses.
* Be able to absorb a respondent's criticism, sharp remarks or rebuffs. Remain calm and nonreactive.

* Be aware of the insights you uncover about the respondent and the emerging data. At the same time, be aware of insights about your personal perspectives on the respondent's comments.

* Be able to frame questions succinctly. It is sometimes necessary to rephrase questions. Flexibility and creativity are essential.

* Learn to quickly adjust to and understand the respondent's terminology and the manner in which the respondent draws relationships.

* Develop the ability to be flexible between interview situations. Each is a uniqye encounter with varying levels of formality, affect, content, etc.

* Use the open-ended situation to uncover the respondent's viewpoints. Guard against an overly casual conversation of irrelevant subjects.

* Recognize digressions that may possibly become relevant.

* Be able to make smooth transitions between the various types of questions, i.e. open-ended question to specific probe; from posing a hypothetical situation to a recapitulation.

* Communicate through your listening and note-taking that you are attentive and serious.

* Be skillful in pacing questions. Develop a sense of when to move from general to more personal or sensitive topics. Do not terminate the interview immediately after the respondent has revealed an especially delicate or personal comment.

* Allow the respondent time to think, react, structure a response and express himself/herself fully.

* Learn to think ahead of the respondent.

* Avoid leading, prejudicial questions.

* Keep track of elapsed interview time, but do so unobtrusively. Remember the issues to be explored and allow adequate time to present them to the respondent.

* Learn how to use interview time to record or review notes, i.e. during a pause, a telephone call or unexpected interruption.

* Keep a sense of humor.

Conclusion

As stated repeatedly throughout this monograph, the only way to develop the skills needed to conduct Naturalistic Evaluation studies is to practice them over protracted intervals of time and in a variety of different contexts. While many of the concepts described herein grow out of a common sense understanding of human nature and human behavior, the art and science of operationalizing these concepts is still difficult to achieve. In a recent interview I did with Studs Terkel (Wolf, 1979c), an absolute master of the interview process, he pointed out the supreme importance of never losing sight of the fact that our respondents are human beings. For Studs, the most difficult task is understanding what makes that human tick--what are his/her fears, hopes, expectations, beliefs, feelings, etc.? Without this kind of understanding, the facts we ascertain are incomplete. And each person that we talk with must be viewed both sympathetically and empathetically if we are to achieve the kind of understanding that does that person justice.

I suppose what I am saying is that one's attitude about people is as important to Naturalistic Evaluation as are the skills one needs to perform it well. I have always believed that if one truly cares about learning something or understanding something he/she will be able to invent their own strategies for doing so. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the ideas present in this guide will serve, at least, as a point of departure for those interested in systematic Naturalistic Evaluation. It should be obvious that not all aspects of the methodology have been emphasized and that the present work concerned itself with the Naturalistic Interview. More in-depth treatment of other important skill areas such as observation,

analysis, and report writing are being revised and will be available soon. But the interview process is a good place to start, because of its centrality to the Naturalistic Evaluation approach. Once the skills of interviewing are developed they form the foundation for mastering other skills needed to implement the method.

THE SCHOOL SITE:

FIELDWORK, PROTOCOL & PROCEDURES

Phase I of the Student Perceptions and School Behavior project will encompass pilot testing in San Antonio, Texas. The target school is located in an area having the largest number of Black residents in the participating independent school district. The next largest group of residents are Mexican-American, and the smallest number of residents are Anglo. Although the area is generally characterized as low socio-economic status (SES), it has been pointed out that many of the most affluent Blacks in San Antonio live in this vicinity. Several administrators indicated that the mixture of high and low SES families tends to make that area rather unique. Moreover, no students are bused into that campus. All students attending the school live within the attendance area.

Sample

The population for this part of the study will be a tri-ethnic (Mexican-American, Black, Anglo) group of approximately twenty eighth-grade students (disruptive and non-disruptive). The school from which the sample will be drawn is a middle school (grades 6-8). Currently, it is the only middle school in the participating district whose ethnic make-up (in numbers) and whose definition by school authorities as a school with a large disruptive population fits the research requirements of the project.

Data Collection

As was mentioned above, our sample is derived from disruptive and non-disruptive students. The ethnographer will not be informed of the individual student's behavioral classification. However, for your information, a description of the selection process follows. (The non-disruptive students will be selected in a random manner, although an attempt will be made to insure equal representation of the tri-ethnic groups.)

School records will be kept on each student in the eighth grade who is referred to the principal's or counselors' offices for disciplinary infractions. Participants in Phase I will be selected from the list of "offenders" for the first three months of the school year (September-November). There are two criteria for selection of disruptive students in this phase. A student may be selected if: (1) a written record exists which delineates specific reasons (behaviors) for the student's referral, and (2) his/her selection allows approximately equal numbers of disruptive students from among the ethnic groups--limited only by the extent to which such "offenses" occur within each of the three groups. Attempts will be made to balance the sex representation in each group. Students whose names do not appear on the list of "offenders" will be considered to be non-disruptive for the purposes of this research.

"Offense" records will include: (1) date of misbehavior, (2) time and place of misbehavior, (3) nature of misbehavior, (4) name/title of person referring the student, (5) name/title of person to whom student is referred, and (6) the action taken by the referral office (in detail).

Once the sample has been selected, parents of the selected students will be contacted by project staff. The initial contact will include a

brief explanation of the purpose/plans for the project and a request that the parent give consent for the student's participation. Parents will be informed that the student was selected to participate in this project to help the school and the student to understand the underlying reasons for disruptive school behavior, and each will be encouraged to give consent for the student's participation.

Target students will be interviewed both formally (a one-to-one confidential discussion with the ethnographer that will usually, but not always, be taped) and informally (i.e., between classes, at lunch or on the school grounds). With regard to the formal interviews, a designated staff member will personally contact each parent and student to explain the purpose and general format of the interview to be conducted. Both the student and the parent will be informed that: (1) the student interviews will take place either at the school or in the student's home, and (2) the parent/guardian will be contacted by a staff member to indicate the place of the interview.

Procedure

Formal interviews will be scheduled at a time that is convenient to both the interviewer and the respondent/student. Since formal interviews will be conducted after class hours, each party will be informed a few days in advance. At the designated period, the ethnographer should arrive at the school site at least 15 minutes prior to the interview time, to make the necessary preparations (i.e., unlock the room, adjust the lighting and ventilation, set up and test the recording instruments, etc.). It may be a good idea to leave the classroom door open so that the student

will know that the interviewer has arrived.

Once the student has arrived, the ethnographer should give a brief statement about the research objective: to try to find out from students how they feel about school, what they like and don't like, and why. The student should be told that his/her help is greatly appreciated and that their responses will be confidential.

The ethnographer should attempt to address some of the questions posed in the SPSB analysis packet. However, it is of major importance to listen to what the student wants to say, and to be sensitive to what he/she feels is important in his/her experience of the world. The student should be allowed to express him/herself as much as possible. but without going off on tangents (e.g., discussing a television show for half an hour). You may need to skillfully redirect the conversation to topics which are more relevant to our research questions. The time frame should be about an hour to an hour and a half. If you find that you or the student is getting tired, stop and take a break. Turn off the tape recorder and, if you like, stretch your legs or get a drink of water--but don't forget to lock the room!

At the end of the interview the ethnographer should thank the student for his/her help and assure him/her again that what they have stated will be kept in strictest confidence.

After the student has left, the ethnographer should rewind the tape recorder and take some time for a self-evaluation of the interview session. It is at this point that the ethnographer should write down his/her impressions of the interview, noting the highlights and weaknesses (if any) of his/her performance (listening, probing or observation skills). Subtle

things to observe include body language, student attitude and facial expressions. The ethnographer should also try to listen carefully to vocal qualities--intonation, speed of speech, mumbling or stuttering, etc. All of these factors may provide signals which indicate an emotional state, such as nervousness, defensiveness, hostility, sadness, apathy, etc. Moreover, the student should be asked to explain any slang words that may be used during the interview. Finally, with regard to probing techniques, the ethnographer should note whether he/she could have rephrased, clarified or elaborated upon anything that the student said, in order to enhance the quality of the interview.

This evaluation, conducted immediately after the interview, will be of great value during analysis of the data after the tape has been transcribed.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOR INTERVIEWING

The following are some of the Do's and Don'ts of interviewing. Read them carefully and remember them when interviewing students.

DO

1. Be warm, accepting, and open. Above all else, LISTEN.
2. Try to be sensitive to what the interviewee is feeling, thinking, etc.
3. Watch for body language.
4. Watch for fatigue.
5. Be able to deal with your own anxiety.
6. Think carefully about the words you use. The interviewee should not have to guess what you mean.
7. Think a little ahead. (But not so much that you don't LISTEN.)
8. Be aware of time, but stay calm. Don't be so concerned that the interviewee is, too.
9. Stress confidentiality.
10. Use pauses to give the student time to articulate what he/she may be feeling.
11. Try to be yourself and stay "natural."

DON'T

1. Be patronizing or condescending.
2. Talk, except when and where necessary. Instead, LISTEN.
3. "Lead" the interviewee through "body" language or verbalizations.
4. Let the student overwhelm you.
5. Make judgments and act on them.
6. Try to fool students. You can be honest about your feelings, but sensible.

7. Try to anticipate the student.

8. Assume you know what the student thinks, feels, or even says.

9. Try to a "psychologist"--focusing on a clinical interview.

10. Interpret for the student--let him/her clarify for you.

11. Get in a hurry.

12. Act like an inquisitor.

13. Make promises you can't keep.

14. Try to force answers.

15. Come on too strong.

16. Ask questions in such a manner to produce a lot of stress, anxiety, or defensiveness.

17. Offer negative comments about other students, teachers or the school administration.

PROBING TECHNIQUES

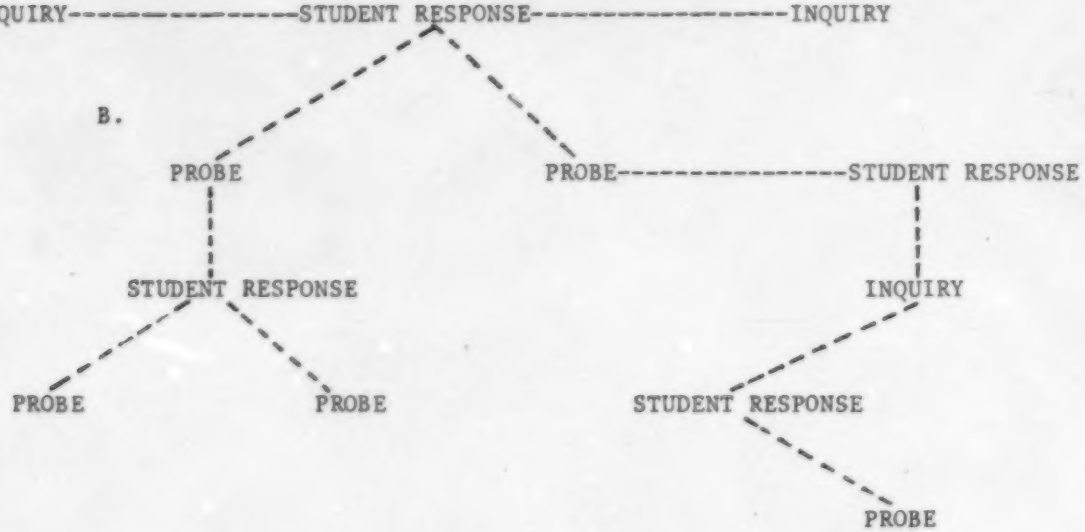
To probe means to penetrate, to examine critically IN ORDER TO OBTAIN INFORMATION. The SPSB project requires probing so that we may obtain an awareness and insight into how and why the student himself/herself formulates opinions and experiences events.

In actuality the student being interviewed, either formally or informally, provides the structure/impetus for the probing employed by the ethnographer.

A.

INQUIRY----------STUDENT RESPONSE----------INQUIRY

B.



As is illustrated above, an interview may proceed in a linear fashion (part A). This entails inquiry, response, inquiry, etc. To our mind, a linear interview is characterized by hearing but not by <u>listening</u>: the interviewer waits until the interviewee is through responding to one question, and then automatically proceeds to the next question on the list.

Part B, however, suggests a more sophisticated and finely-tuned technique: posing a question and then using the student response as the pivotal basis for directing the course of the next question (inquiry or probe). In this manner, the respondant assumes a higher degree of self control and autonomy. He/she relates or expresses what is inherently deemed as important or meaningful. This dialectical process requires a higher level of commitment on the part of the ethnographer, who needs to be more sensitive to nuances in order to recognize and understand the student's perceptions. Indeed, since the SPSB project is wholly student centered, the student himself/herself determines the direction of the interview. The ethnographer's role, then, is two-fold: (1) to follow the student's directions and (2) to use these directions as the mechanism for uncovering and identifying students' perceptions of their world.

A Word to the Wise

Because SPSB ethnographers are grounded in the world of the junior high school student, it is important to emphasize that knowledge/understanding of content (wording) and context (situation and location) should not be an assumed fact but an elaborated revelation. Awkardness and frustration may ensue if the student:

1. does not understand the question.
2. feels compelled to provide an answer that he/she thinks the ethnographer wants to hear.
3. has never been put in a position to think about, much less articulate, his/her feelings about a particular question.

As such, probing necessitates re-phrasing, patience, acceptance and reassurance. A student's "I don't know" may mean a number of different

things: "I really don't know," "I don't know what you want," "I need to think about this more," and even "I don't want to answer."

In some instances, pausing and giving the student time to answer can be reassuring. At other times, a moment's pause can cause excruciating pain by making the student feel pressured to answer. The ethnographer must be aware of the possible side-effects of pausing, and ultimately strive to reassure the student. A "Why don't you think about that and we may get back to it later . . ." can serve to immediately put the student off the spot and give him/her time to reflect upon the question posed.

We have found during the pilot phase of the SPSB project that broad, summary questions have a tendency to confuse and frustrate students. Indeed, they seem able to respond more easily to narrow and specific questions (although this is a general rule of thumb and should not be taken as an absolute). The following are suggestions and examples of questions that may elicit meaningful data. A number of the probes given below were suggested to the SPSB Project Manager by secondary school students attending an alternative school in a large southwestern city. The students were asked by the SPSB manager to provide feedback on (1) how to interview junior high school students in a manner that puts them more at ease, and (2) how to ask questions that junior high school students could more easily relate to.

(Note: The SPSB Project had hoped to incorporate peer interviewers (ethnographers) into our study but, unfortunately, insufficient funding prevented follow-through on this portion of the study.)

Probing Examples

I. SCHOOLING AND LEARNING

How are you doing in school?

(Probes:)

Do you understand what you have read in class?

What way does your favorite/least favorite teacher teach?

When do you feel good about the school work that you turn in?

II. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

What are your teachers like?

(Probes:)

Do your teachers help you understand the work that they give you?

Is everyone treated the same in all your classes?

When do you think you get the most attention from your teachers?

III. THE SCHOOL MILIEU

Do you like your school?

(Probes:)

How is this school like (or different from) other schools?

What do you think about on your way to school?

Where would you be if you weren't in school? How do you feel about that?

What rules are there in this school? Do they count?

Who do you think are the most important people in this school?

IV. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Have you ever been sent to the office? Why?

(Probes:)

What are some reasons that students get sent to the office?

What are "big things" and "little things" to get sent to the office for doing?

Are there any group of students sent to the office more than others? Why do you think this happens?

Does spanking

suspending

scolding

sending students to the Alternative Center (On Campus Suspension)

calling parents

assigning D-Hall

stop students from misbehaving in this school? Why

Students are usually the only ones punished in schools? Should anyone else be? Why?

V. COPING AND STRESS

Why do you act the way that you do at school?

(Probes:)

What usually happens when you have a good day (bad day) at school?

Who are the people that you care about at school? Why?

Do you feel accepted by most of the students (teachers)?

VI. THE BROADER WORLD

What is the purpose of going to school?

How are things in your community?

What interests you about the news (current event)?

How do you feel about race or sex stereotypes?

(Probes:)

Do you think that your time at this school will be important as you get older?

Describe your neighborhood.

Does anyone you know talk about (gas shortage, inflation, Iranian hostages, the draft, etc.)? What do you feel about this?

Is there anything that you feel that a person of your (race, ethnicity, sex) shouldn't or can't do?

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Post Script

The reader may have noticed that a few key terms were used interchangeably throughout this manual, in particular "ethnographer" and "interviewer." In our minds, these terms are one and the same. Moreover, these two terms are synonymous with a third term, "observer." Because of this, at a future date the SPSB project plans to integrate our two training manuals (which now separately consider observation and interviewing skills) into one monograph.

In addition, as this study evolves we shall be making available analysis packets which will highlight the in-school field strategies to be implemented by the SPSB project.

Finally, we feel that the beauty of naturalistic inquiry methodology as a feature of qualitative research lies in its naturalness and fluidity. Mark Twain once said, "I never let my schooling interfere with my education." We hope that our ethnographers adhere to the same philosophy and not allow searching for the "facts" to interfere with knowing the students participating in and contributing to our education.